

13 March 1981

MEMORANDUM FOR: NIO for Warning

SUBJECT : The Case for an Alert Memo on an Imminent Showdown in Poland  
and Possible Soviet Military Intervention

1. There is an impressive array of indications that the Soviet-Polish talks in Moscow on 4 March marked a major breakpoint in the Polish crisis. The Soviet leaders applied overwhelming pressure on Kania and Jaruzelski to abandon what Moscow sees as a dangerous policy of appeasement. They probably confronted the Poles with an ultimatum: either move promptly against Solidarity, KOR, and reformists within the Polish party or face the consequences of Soviet/Warsaw Pact military intervention. [REDACTED]

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3. The failure of the 10 March announcement of SOYUZ-81 to mention the Helsinki Accords requirement of 21 days notice raises the possibility of deception: that SOYUZ-81 will provide the pretext for the introduction of Soviet forces into Poland in support of the use of Polish security and military forces, under a declaration of martial law, against strikes called by Solidarity. Such military [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

Having coerced the Poles into shifting to confrontation tactics, the Soviets almost certainly would take a variety of steps to raise their intervention readiness to respond to the contingency that Polish forces will be unable to cope with widespread public disorder and strikes. There is good reason to believe that Soviet military leaders have serious doubts about the reliability of Polish military forces if ordered to enforce martial law.

5. We may be dealing here with a classic case of Soviet deception. The failure to give the required 21-day advance notice of SOYUZ-81 may be designed to conceal the magnitude of the exercise. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED] Moscow obviously has a strong incentive to avoid tipping its hand in advance and to deny Western governments the last-minute opportunity to publicize Soviet military measures in an effort to deter intervention.

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